

about this particular member. In addition, this web page contains hyperlinks to the home pages of buyer and seller's auction websites.

Referring to Fig. 9h, a web page that displays the comments a particular company has received. The screen capture also shows the various comments and ratings the company has received from consumers.

Referring to Fig. 9i, a buyer or seller's home page is linked to the web page described in Fig. 9g. The home page of a buyer or seller contains personalized information, including but not limited to, contact information and provides hyperlinks to the buyer or seller's current auctions, activity and feedback across multiple auction websites.

Referring to Fig. 9j, a TrustPoints™ logo is located on the website of a member of the points-based program, and a user can click on the logo to view information discussed in Fig. 9g.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing customer service interactions via a communication network, comprising:

receiving a comment about a company or a company's products and services from a consumer of the company;

storing the comment; and

providing access to the comment via the communication network.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

sending notification to the company that the comment has been received;

receiving a query from the company;

receiving a response to the comment from the company;

~~storing the response from the company; and~~

providing access to the response via the communication network.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein said receiving a query from the company further  
5 comprises forwarding the comment to the company.

4. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

sending notification to the consumer that a response has been received;

receiving a query from the consumer; and

forwarding the response to the consumer.

10 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the comment comprises an evaluation of the  
company or the company's products and services and a quantitative rating, wherein  
said quantitative rating is based on a rating scheme.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the evaluation comprises any combination of  
remarks, statements, criticisms, complaints, compliments, feedback and suggestions.

15 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising rating a plurality of companies based upon  
a plurality of comments received from a plurality of consumers.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

assigning a value to each comment;

compiling the values of comments received for each company;

20 ranking the plurality of companies based on the compiled values; and

providing access to company ratings and rankings via the communication  
network.

9. The method according to claim 7, further comprising:

sorting comments received based on comment type;  
assigning numeric values to each comment;  
compiling comments by adding the numeric values for each comment type for  
each company; and

5 providing access to the compiled comments via the communication network.

10. The method of claim 4, wherein said forwarding the comment to the company and  
forwarding the response to the consumer comprises sending notification via e-mail..

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing a data entry form in response to  
a query from a consumer and said receiving a comment about a company comprising  
10 retrieving the comment from the data entry form.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the data entry form is written using Hypertext  
Markup Language (HTML).

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the data entry form includes any combination of  
JAVA Applet and Active X control.

15 14. The method of claim 1, wherein said storing the comments about the company  
comprises storing the comment in Extensible Markup Language (XML) document  
format.

~~15. The method of claim 2, further comprising:~~

~~said storing the comment comprising storing the comment in a database of a  
20 server computer coupled to the communication network; and  
said forwarding the comment to the company comprising e-mailing the comment  
to the company from the database via the communication network.~~

16. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

embedding a hyperlink into an e-mail notification;

5 said sending a notification to the company comprising sending the e-mail notification to a company; and

10 said receiving a query and forwarding the comment to the company comprising providing access to the company in response to selection of the embedded hyperlink.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising providing a data form to the company, and said receiving a response from the company comprising retrieving the response entered by the company in the data form.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising:

10 providing a website and enabling access to the website via the communication network; and

enabling the company to register at the website.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising:

providing access to the website in response to said receiving a query upon

15 selection of the hyperlink; and

forcing the company to register at the website before said providing a data form to the company.

20. The method of claim 4, further comprising:

20 said storing the response from the company comprising storing the response in a database of a server computer coupled to the communication network; and

said sending a notification to the consumer comprising notifying the consumer via an e-mail message.

21. The method of claim 20, further comprising:

embedding a hyperlink in the e-mail message and said receiving a query from the consumer; and

forwarding the response to the consumer comprising providing a data page to the consumer, including the response from the company in response to selection of the embedded hyperlink by the consumer.

22. The method of claim 4, wherein said forwarding the comment to the company and said forwarding the response to the consumer each further comprise selecting any one of sending an e-mail notification, placing a telephone call, sending a fax, and sending a pager notification.

23. The method of claim 1, wherein data is transferred according to the Extensible Markup Language (XML) document format and document type definitions (DTDs) specific to the consumer.

24. The method of claim 1, wherein said receiving, storing, sending and providing are performed by a server computer coupled to the communication network; the server computer including a database.

25. The method of claim 1, the communication network comprising the Internet, wherein said receiving, sending and providing are performed via the Internet.

26. A method of providing customer service interactions via a communication network comprising:

providing a database, wherein said database serves to relate queries with preprogrammed responses in the form of data entry forms and stores information entered into the data entry form;

delivering queries to the database over the communication network;

accessing data entry forms relevant to the queries;  
inputting data to the data entry forms; and  
storing the data in the database.

27. The method of claim 26, further comprising displaying a graphical interface to the  
5 database for access over the network, wherein the graphical interface is viewed in  
said accessing data entry forms, and the data is input in the graphical interface in said  
inputting data to the data entry forms.

28. The method of claim 26, wherein delivering, on the one hand, and accessing and  
10 inputting, on the other hand, are performed at geographically remote locations on the  
communication network.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein delivering queries is performed via a static  
Hypertext Markup Language page and the database generates a dynamic Hypertext  
Markup Language page based on the queries from the static Hypertext Markup  
Language page.

30. The method of claim 26, wherein providing and storing are performed by a server  
15 computer; delivering is performed by any combination of consumer communication  
device, company communication device and third party communication device and  
accessing and inputting are performed by any combination of a consumer  
communication device, a company communication device or a third party  
20 communication device.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the consumer communication device, company  
communication device and third party communication device is a computer.

32. The method of claim 26, wherein the network is the Internet.

33. A system for providing a customer service intermediary between at least one consumer communication device and a company communication device across a communication network comprising:

a processor;

5 a memory device coupled to said processor;

a communication device coupled to said processor and said memory device, that enables communication via the communication network;

a database that is stored and updated in said memory device; and

10 an application program that is executed by said processor from said memory device comprising:

first code, responsive to a query from the consumer communication device via said communication device that instructs said communication device to send a data entry form to the consumer communication device;

15 second code, responsive to receiving a data entry form back from the consumer communication device via said communication device that stores a comment from the data entry form into said database; and

third code, responsive to receiving said data entry form back from the consumer communication via said communication device that instructs said communication device to send a notification of the comment to the company communication device.

20 34. The system of claim 33, the application program further comprising:

fourth code, responsive to a query from the company communication device via said communication device, that instructs said communication device to forward said comment to the company communication device;

fifth code, responsive to a query from the company communication device via said communication device, that instructs said communication device to send a response data form to the company communication device;

sixth code, responsive to receiving a response data form back from the company communication device via said communication device that stores a response from said response data form into said database; and

seventh code, responsive to receiving said response data form back from the company communication device via said communication device that instructs said communication device to send a notification of the response to the consumer communication device.

35. The system of claim 34, the application program further comprising:

eighth code, responsive to a query from the consumer communication device via said communication device, that instructs said communication device to forward said response to the consumer communication device.

36. A method of providing a rating mechanism of companies or their products and services via a communication network comprising:

providing a website and enabling access to the website via the communication network;

enabling registration at the website wherein a company registers for membership in a points-based program;

receiving a comment about a company or the company's products and services from a consumer of the company;



rating the company or the company's products and services based upon said comment;

awarding points to the company or the company's products and services based upon level of rating; and

5 ranking the company or the company's products and services based upon level of rating.

37. The method of claim 36, wherein said enabling registration comprises:

providing a registration form wherein the company enters company contact information and makes payment; and

10 activating membership into the points-based program.

38. The method of claim 37, wherein said activating membership comprises:

displaying membership information on the website; and

displaying membership logo on the website.

39. The method of claim 37, wherein said activating membership comprises validating

15 payment into the points-based program.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein said activating further comprises making the company agree to terms of a license agreement.

41. The method of claim 36, wherein said ranking the company or the company's products and services based upon said level of rating comprises:

20 assigning a quantitative value to each comment;

compiling the values of comments received for the company or the company's products and services;

ranking the company or the company's products and services based on the  
compiled values; and

providing access to the company rating and ranking via the communication  
network.

5 42. The method according to claim 36, wherein awarding points to the company  
comprises:

sorting comments received based on comment type;

assigning numeric values to each comment;

10 compiling comments by adding the numeric values for each comment type for  
each company; and

providing access to the compiled comments via the communication network.

43. The method of claim 42, wherein said awarding points further comprises assigning  
membership levels based upon the numeric value.

15 44. The method of claim 43, wherein said assigning membership levels comprises  
providing access to said membership levels via the communication network.

20 45. The method of claim 36, wherein said providing a website and enabling access to said  
website further comprises providing a web page, wherein said web page comprises  
personalized information about the company; said web page further comprising  
hyperlinks to a buyer or seller's auction site; said web page further comprising  
providing feedback across multiple auction sites.